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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 003922

SIPDIS

STATE FOR D, P, E, EUR A/S JONES, NEA A/S BURNS, AND
EUR/SE; DOD FOR DEPSEC AND ASD CROUCH; NSC FOR DEPUTY NSA
HADLEY AND FRIED. JCS FOR J5

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#)

SUBJECT: UNILATERAL ACTIONS BY KURDISH GROUPS CONTINUE TO
HAMPER FLOW OF HUMANITARIAN AND RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE
TO IRAQ; TIME FOR A PLAN

REF: ANKARA 3794

(U) Classified by A/DCM Stuart V. Brown. Reasons: 1.5 (B
and D).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. See para 3.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) The KDP's June 17 refusal to allow a 40-person delegation of Iraqi businessmen to cross into Turkey to meet with Turkish businessmen, together with the KDP's continued practice of charging taxes/fees for goods crossing the Turkish-Iraqi border (reftel), is disrupting the flow of assistance to Iraq and is restricting our overall reconstruction efforts. The Turks responded to the KDP's refusal to allow the businessmen to cross into Turkey by temporarily shutting down Habur Gate and thus halting the flow of all goods (humanitarian and commercial, including trucks carrying LPG fuel via the Ground Line of Communication) into Iraq. While the KDP has since allowed the Iraqis to enter Turkey and the Turks have re-opened Habur Gate, this latest KDP action and Turkey's reaction is a reminder that as long as the Kurdish groups continue to "run" the border on their own, reconstruction and humanitarian assistance through Turkey will not flow smoothly to Iraq. The KDP's unilateral, uncoordinated actions will also continue to restrict our ability to press the Turks to implement the steps they need to take to open up their side of the border. End summary.

ACTION

[1](#)3. (C) We need a plan now that removes the existing obstacles to the free flow of assistance and commerce (including people) to and from Iraq. Such a plan must be satisfactory to all parties involved and address existing problems on both sides of the Turkish-Iraqi border. For the Turkish side, we recommend that the US continue to press the GOT hard to open its border fully to two-way trade. On the Iraqi side, the USG needs to devise (with the KDP if necessary) a more equitable, transparent system for processing the movement of goods and people into/from Iraq. After we have developed a plan and secured a commitment from the KDP to implement it, we should brief the Turks on its details and ensure them the USG intends to enforce it. If the KDP resists the plan or does not implement it, Washington should instruct US officials in Iraq to immediately assume greater administrative and security control of the border crossings to ensure proper implementation. End action request.

IRAQI BUSINESS DELEGATION TURNED AWAY AT BORDER

[1](#)4. (C) MFA Iraq Department Head Kerim Uras informed us June 17 that KDP forces had denied a delegation of 40 Iraqi businessmen entry into Turkey to meet with Turkish businessmen earlier that same day. Uras said the KDP had told the Iraqis (most of whom are Turkmen from Mosul and Kirkuk) that they first must travel to Irbil to obtain "proper documentation and permission" from KPD officials there before they would be permitted to travel to Turkey. Uras said that while only half of the individuals possessed passports, the GOT was willing to let them enter Turkey using

Iraqi identification cards given Turkey's interest in facilitating stronger business ties between the Turkey and Iraq. Uras said that the GOT had complied with past practices regarding travel by Iraqis to Turkey by informing the KDP at least three days in advance (June 13) of the delegation's visit and said that the KDP had not objected to the visit. Uras said that some of the Iraqis were being told they would have to pay \$1,000 to KDP officials in Irbil as part of the process of obtaining permission to travel to Turkey. Uras said that when he called the local KDP rep, Safeen Dizayee, to complain about the delegation not being allowed to travel to Turkey, Dizayee reportedly said the delegation was most likely turned away because it had not followed the proper procedures and first would need to travel to Irbil. TGS also sent ODC Chief a letter complaining about KDP discrimination against Turkmen at the border.

15. (C) Dizayee told us later June 17 that the KDP did not have advance notice of the visit. He said he first learned of the visit that same day when the MFA called to complain about the treatment of the delegation at the border. Noting that many of the Iraqis did not possess Iraqi passports, Dizayee said "how can Turks demand during the past 12 years that all travelers from northern Iraq have passports in order to enter Turkey and then, all of a sudden, demand that we let anyone cross into Turkey with just an identification card?" He defended the requirement that all Iraqis in the north travel to Irbil ("the central processing center for the north") and argued that all Iraqis are required to pay a fee to travel to Turkey. Dizayee also said that the KDP continued to limit the number of visas issued to Iraqis to travel to Turkey (five/day), but that if an Iraqi wanted to get around this restriction they could pay the Iraqi Turkmen Front approximately \$650 and "go to the front of the line." (Note: if the KDP is running the border, it is unclear to us how the ITF is able to circumvent KDP quotas. End note.)

16. (C) Uras called us late June 17 to report that the KDP had changed its position and allowed 20 members of the delegation to cross into Turkey. Uras did not know the reason, but suspected that the KDP's reversal of position was a result of the Embassy's earlier inquiry to the KDP and the fact that these 20 individuals possessed Iraqi passports.

TURKEY RETALIATES BY TEMPORARILY SHUTTING DOWN HABUR GATE

17. (C) The US contractor VBR notified US military officials at Incirlik early June 18 that the Turks had closed Habur Gate. In response to the Embassy's query, the MFA's initial response was that it was unaware that the border had been closed. The MFA later called back to confirm that Habur Gate had indeed been closed temporarily in "retaliation" for the KDP's discriminatory practices of not allowing the Turkmen to enter Turkey, and that the Gate would be open to all commerce around 1200 local time. Uras from the MFA's Iraq desk called one hour later to report that Gate was open and that priority would be given to trucks transporting humanitarian assistance and LPG through the GLOC. At around 1400 (local time), trucks carrying UN humanitarian assistance and the LPG via the GLOC began to cross the Habur Gate into Iraq.

KDP ALLOWS THE REMAINING BUSINESSMEN TO CROSS

18. (C) Uras called us at 1300 local June 18 to report that the KDP had agreed to allow the remaining 20 Iraqi businessmen to cross into Turkey. Uras said the decision as made by KDP leader Nechirvan Barzani following a request (via the Ankara KDP rep) by a senior TGS official. According to Uras, Barzani agreed to allow the remaining 20 to cross, but said it was "the last time." From here on out, all travelers to Turkey would have to follow the procedures and apply for permission from the KDP office in Irbil. The KDP's Dizayee separately told us that eight of the remaining 20 had shown up at the Iraqi side of the Gate and were being allowed to cross. He did not know the whereabouts of the remaining 12, but assured us they would be permitted to cross if/when they appeared at the border crossing.

19. (C) Dizayee also said there were approximately 70 Iraqi citizens "stranded" at the Habur Gate on the Turkish side of the border who were not being allowed to travel to Iraq. He said that the Turkish military officials were only allowing those Iraqis who were born in Turkmen-dominated areas of the north to cross, and sending back to Turkey those Iraqis from KDP and PUK-controlled areas. Dizayee said that when the

Iraqis asked why they were not being permitted to cross, the Turkish military authorities at Habur reportedly told them that "as soon as the 12 remaining Turkmen businessmen cross into Turkey, you can cross into Iraq." Dizayee said that if the Iraqis were not permitted to cross by 1700 local (when Habur closes), the KDP would be forced to issue a public statement criticizing the Turks for not allowing innocent civilians to return home.

10. (C) The MFA's Uras told us the GOT is aware of the presence of the Iraqi civilians on the Turkish side of the border waiting to return to Iraq. He said the MFA is working with other GOT agencies to defuse the situation and expressed hoped the problem would be solved by "this evening."

PEARSON